



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

REGION 4
ATLANTA FEDERAL CENTER
61 FORSYTH STREET
ATLANTA, GEORGIA 30303-8960

November 9, 2011

Mr. Brian Smart
Environmental Protection Specialist
Federal Transit Administration, Region IV
230 Peachtree Street, N.W., Suite 800
Atlanta, Georgia 30303-1512

SUBJECT: Federal Final Environmental Impact Statement for the LYNX Blue Line Extension Northeast Corridor Light Rail Project, Center City, Charlotte to Interstate 85, Mecklenburg County, North Carolina; FTA-E40834-NC; CEQ No.: 20110341

Dear Mr. Smart:

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region 4 Office has reviewed the subject document and is commenting in accordance with Section 309 of the Clean Air Act (CAA) and Section 102(2)(C) of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and the Charlotte Area Transit System (CATS) are proposing to construct an approximate 9.4 mile extension of the light rail system from Center City Charlotte to south of Interstate 485. The proposed light rail improvement would primarily utilize existing railroad right of way for the first 4 miles and then be located in the median of North Tryon Street/US-29 for a substantial portion of the remaining distance. There would be a new location segment as it enters the University of North Carolina at Charlotte (UNC-Charlotte) campus.


The Preferred Alternative identified in the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) includes 11 stations, four with park-and-ride facilities (with over 3,100 total parking spaces) and seven walk-up stations. Bus service connections would also be provided at most stations. EPA reviewed the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) and provided comments in our October 8, 2010, letter. EPA requested further details in the FEIS regarding potential noise mitigation measures for an Environmental Justice community. EPA has attached review comments on the FEIS (See Attachment A).

In summary, EPA supports the development of additional mass transit options in the Charlotte area because it provides an alternative to the sole reliance on automobiles for transportation demand, and with the mitigation measures proposed in the FEIS should result in fewer adverse impacts. From an air quality perspective, mass transit options generally reduce the amount of additional air emissions in the transportation corridor

compared to highway options. EPA notes that FTA estimates a reduction of 75 million miles/year of vehicular traffic with the proposed project with a corresponding air pollutant emissions reduction.

If there are any questions concerning these comments, please contact Mr. Christopher A. Militscher of my staff at (919) 856-4206 or by e-mail at militscher.chris@epa.gov. Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Mueller", with a stylized, flowing script.

Heinz J. Mueller, Chief
NEPA Program Office

Cc: M. Hamel, NCDOT-Rail
S. Hair, USACE
B. Wrenn, NCDWQ
J. Dellert-O'Keef, CATS